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## Golf from a Neurological View-Point.

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Long before the Columbian rediscovery of America our hardy Caledonian ancestry amused themselves by playing the royal and ancient game which has been defined as "the putting of little balls into little holes with instruments very ill adapted to the purpose." In those days certain ascetic and lugubrious persons, like the sham-pious reformers of the present, who condemn as sinful anything that makes people feel happy, cried down golf, football and other so-called unprofitable sports, which they prohibited by decree, the legislative blight being a canon of the old Scotch parliament against golf.

It being difficult to extinguish strong instincts, people gave no heed to such prohibitions against the natural and wholesome promptings of the play impulse and manly pastimes of a vigorous race, and to-day we find a game with a long pedigree taken up and assimilated from Scotland and so fascinating as to have spread around the English-speaking world.

Instead of dividing mankind, as some mathematicians do, into two classes, namely, those who have read analytical geometry and those who have not, it is more appropriate to divide them into those who play golf and those who do not, or

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as an enthusiastic devotee to golf might put it, those who are long drivers and those who are not.

What was yesterday the fad of a few has to-day become the practice of many sorts and conditions of men who find in the exhilarating game of golf (which experts prefer to call a *study*) a means of hygiene and a sport of inestimable value.

A short time since in a paper prepared for this Association "on the conservative value of the play impulse," I endeavored to point out the individual and philogenic good brought about by the exercise of the manly sports which bring together men and women of the leisure class at such places as the tennis court, the hunt, the meet, and the golf links. Since then the game of St. Andrews in Fifeshire has encircled the earth like the world-invading Campbells, and the descendants of a race to which Piper Findlater belongs take their amusement seriously at sea-side links or on grassy moorlands at a game than which none is a severe test of nerve or requires more stupid, dogged patience and harder work.

Any golf player familiar with the niblick shot out of sand in front of a bunker cliff will, I am sure, recognize the cool judgment and prompt action required by a successful player who makes a good drive and avoids or extricates himself from awkward hazards, as well as the many advantages entailed thereby in the way of invigorating and healthy employment of the highest bodily activities.

Doubtless from the sportsman's point of view and that of the hygienist the value of golf is quite apparent, but its therapeutic value, not so well established, is practically an untrodden field and in need of an exponent.

In the capacity of physician and neurologist it is impossible to familiarize one's self with the facts of the game in this relation without seeing its many advantages and acknowledging its merits as beyond all praise.

To the neurologist, who trusts to psychic, mechanical and hygienic influences rather than to drugs for treatment, the theme is replete with magnificent possibilities of prophylaxis and even of therapeutics. We have a royal road to physical exhilaration in a game that can be played all the year round,

independently of atmospheric vicissitudes, during all the seven ages of man, by delicate young girls as well as by strong athletes, and even by decrepit old men whose declining powers do not admit of severe exertion. It combines exercise, pleasure and fresh air without that risk of injury to heart, lungs, or nervous system as is the case in certain other exercises in which there is high blood pressure and arterial tension. There is absolutely no danger attached to the game and consequently no accidents ensue. Unlike the bicycle, it is doubtful if such a thing as an accident insurance was ever paid for injury incurred at golf. Nor is the game contraindicated in heart lesions, arterial calcification, albuminuria, old age, childhood or certain hysterical conditions which would be aggravated by such exercise as bicycling, swimming, horse-back riding, or by mountain climbing.

I may say that in all affections marked by slowing of oxidation or in those consequent upon intoxication by the products of organic disassimilation, the game of golf is to be recommended as the best method of bringing about a cure.

The obesity and degeneration of middle age, when the biceps has diminished and one's energy is failing, may be helped by devotion to golf. The further tendency of the exercise is to eliminate the so-called diatheses and thus do away with gout, lithæmia, headache, and dyspepsia; while its hygienic and therapeutic consequences are admissible in cardiac and pulmonary affections. Although moderation is advisable under such circumstances, there can be no doubt of the benefit derived in some cases of cough, nervous asthma, and in affections of the bladder and prostate; but it is preeminently in functional nervous disease that our great Anglo-Saxon game is to be recommended both as prophylactic and curative. No exercise or recreation is better fitted for the mentally over-worked, the hysterical, the melancholic; none helps to preserve the concerted action of eye, brain, and muscle known as the psychological moment; none, perhaps with the exception of swimming, gives one so good an appetite; there is not a more sovereign remedy for dyspepsia, and as to insomnia, such a thing scarcely exists among the devotees of golf.



Improvement in appetite and digestion have come under the notice of nearly everyone connected with a golf club. Only two years ago the breezy air of the Newport Golf-Green caused such an improvement in this respect that the members of the club replaced a French by a negro cook, whose dishes were considered more wholesome and better suited to a golfer's appetite.

In addition to the unconscious vigor of body and mind imparted by golf the social amenities arising therefrom are of unquestionable therapeutic value, since the genial influences of the game by expanding the ideas tend to promote the good fellowship that comes from diversion and sensuous amusement, and by oiling the wheels of life, so to speak, makes them go on with rattling glee. In these days of excessive drive, competition and over-pressure, when undue waste of vital energy shows itself to the clinician in the shape of various neuropathic conditions and decayed nerve elements, the problem of averting or mitigating such mischief comes to us with much seriousness. An obvious help in the solution is the encouragement of all innocent sports and recreations as a compensating factor in the phenomena of life. The condition applicable to the greater number is partly met by the present "boom" in a game that accurately reflects and expresses a great race and falls in with the spirit of our age of haste and objectivity.

If there is one innocent recreation adapted more than another to all sorts and conditions of both men and women, but more especially to the gloaming of life when the mind needs an alterative, it assuredly is to be found in the national game of Scotland.



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